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INVASION OF COSTA RICA.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES CONTAINED IN A RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE, AUGUST 2, 1919, IN REGARD TO THE INVASION OF COSTA RICA BY NICARAGUAN ARMED FORCES AND THE REASON WHY COSTA RICA WAS NOT PERMITTED TO SIGN THE PEACE TREATY AT VERSAILLES.

AUGUST 21, 1919.—Read; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed.

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES:

In response to the resolution of the Senate of the 2d instant requesting that the President inform the Senate whether Nicaragua has been and is now permitted, with armed forces, to invade and to threaten with invasion the territory of Costa Rica, or has permitted armed bands to organize or rendezvous within her territory for such purposes; and for what reason Costa Rica, a belligerent with the Allies in the war just ended, was not permitted to sign the treaty of peace at Versailles, I transmit herewith a report of the Secretary of State, answering the inquiries contained in the resolution.

WOODROW WILSON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
August 21, 1919.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, August 16, 1919.

The PRESIDENT: In reply to the inquiries in the Senate resolution specified in his transmitting letter, concerning the relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and the reason for which Costa Rica was not permitted to sign the treaty of peace of Versailles, the undersigned, the Secretary of State, has the honor to report as follows:

The Government of the United States has consistently used its best efforts to maintain peace in Central America. Actuated by this motive, whenever information has reached it tending to indicate that any persons within the territory of Nicaragua were contemplating passing from that country to territory of the Republic of Costa Rica for the purpose of engaging in armed political movements, the Government of the United States has made representations to the Government of Nicaragua calling that Government's attention to the usages of international comity and international law.

The spirit which animated the Government of the United States and the Government of Nicaragua in becoming signatories of the treaty of Washington, and which was set forth in that treaty, was also invoked in this relation.

On November 4, 1918, the Department of State instructed the American legation in Nicaragua, in view of reports of revolutionary activities in that country against Costa Rica, to recall to the attention of the President of Nicaragua a statement of the attitude of the United States in this matter, which was cabled to the legation by the department on June 4, 1918, for communication to the President of Nicaragua, with the object of obtaining the exercise of his good offices in preventing any such activities.

The same instruction of November 4, 1918, also directed the legation to communicate to the President of Nicaragua the contents of a cablegram sent to the American Legation in Honduras on October 26, 1918, for communication to the President of that country, in which a statement was made to the effect that, while the Government of the United States was aware of the unfortunate conditions existing in Costa Rica, it could not give its approval to any use of force against Costa Rica or the persons exercising de facto authority there.

On January 27, 1919, the legation to Nicaragua was instructed, in view of reports of military activity in Costa Rica which, it was thought, might be due to expectation of an attack, to bring the above information again to the attention of the President of Nicaragua. On April 29, 1919, the legation was instructed to express this Government's hopes that Nicaragua would be guided in this matter by considerations of international comity. On May 23, 1919, it was stated, in an instruction to the legation, that the Department of State desired to urge upon the President of Nicaragua that Nicaragua not only remain strictly neutral, should a conflict arise between Mr. Tinoco, of Costa Rica, and his opponents, but also fulfill its duty carefully by preventing the organization of expeditions in Nicaragua.

Paraphrases of the telegraphic instructions mentioned, and a copy of a letter of the Acting Secretary of State to the senior Senator from New Hampshire, on this subject, are inclosed.

The President and Government of Nicaragua have responded in a gratifying manner to the requests for their cooperation, and the efficacy of the steps taken to preserve peace in Central America is indicated by the fact that the Government of the United States is not advised of any serious collision with defensive forces by any armed forces seeking to enter Costa Rica from Nicaragua or Nicaragua from Costa Rica.

The second inquiry contained in the resolution of the Senate asks why "Costa Rica, a belligerent with the Allies in the war just ended, was not permitted to sign the treaty of peace at Versailles."

In view of the fact that the Government of the United States has not recognized the existence in the Republic of Costa Rica of a *de jure* or even a legitimately *de facto* government, but holds that only the people of Costa Rica can as a moral force set up in that country a government constitutional in character and duly sanctioned by law, it follows naturally that the Government of the United States could not recognize as legally existent any manifestation of such a government.

To declare war is one of the highest acts of sovereignty. The Government of Costa Rica being for the Government of the United States legally nonexistent, it follows that so far as the Government of the United States is concerned, no state of war could exist between Costa Rica and the Imperial German Government. Obviously, there could be no question so far as this Government was concerned as to signing with Costa Rica the treaty of peace of Versailles.

Respectfully submitted.

ROBERT LANSING.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House.

JANUARY 28, 1919.

DEAR MR. SENATOR: I am in receipt of your letter of January 18, in which you ask that the American Legations in Nicaragua and Honduras be advised that further armed movements are being formulated in the above-mentioned countries against the Tinoco government in Costa Rica and further asking me to take steps to obtain that such movements be suppressed.

In reply I wish to advise you that the department some time ago instructed the legations at Tegucigalpa and Managua to call to the attention of the Governments of Honduras and Nicaragua the fact that this Government could not approve of the armed activities which appeared to be contemplated in each of these countries. Only last week the position which the department had taken in this connection was reaffirmed to both Governments.

I am my dear Senator Moses,
Sincerely yours,

FRANK L. POLK.

The Hon. GEORGE H. MOSES,
United States Senate.

[Paraphrase of a cablegram to the American Legation at Managua, Nov. 4, 1918, 2 p. m.]

The department is advised that the President of Nicaragua has made a proposal to the President of Honduras relating to the subject of revolutionary activities against Costa Rica. Our legation at Tegucigalpa informs the department that it has sent this information to you. Regarding this proposal the department desires you to recall at once to the attention of the Nicaraguan President the attitude assumed by this Government concerning Costa Rica, which was set forth in department's cable message of June 4, 5 p. m., second paragraph. You are also instructed to communicate to the President of Nicaragua the statements sent in the cable instruction to the legation of the United States at Tegucigalpa for communication to the President of Honduras, which instructions are as follows:

Reference is made to the legation's cable message of October 26, 11 a. m.

You will advise the President of Honduras at once that the position of the United States has been clearly set forth respecting the question of the recognition of Tinoco's government, and that while the Government of the United States is aware of existing conditions in Costa Rica, which are unfortunate, it can not lend its approval to any use of force as would appear to be now in view, for the reason that the Government of the United States holds that only the people of Costa Rica can as a moral force set up in that country a government constitutional in character and duly authorized by law.

You will also inform the President of Honduras that this Government appreciates his declaration that, in the matter above referred to, he will be absolutely guided by the advice communicated by the Government of the United States.

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[Paraphrase of a telegram from the Department of State to the American Legation, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, dated Jan. 5, 1919, 1 p. m.]

Reference is made to department's November 4, 2 p. m.

Reports from Costa Rica state that there is much military activity, and probably, fearing attack from Nicaragua and Honduras, troops are being sent toward the Pacific. You will again bring to the attention of President Bertrand the information contained in the telegram of November 4, 1919, from the Department of State.

[Paraphrase of a telegram from the Department of State to the American Legation, Managua, Nicaragua dated Jan. 27, 1919, 6 p. m.]

Reference is made to department's November 4, 2 p. m.

Reports from Costa Rica state that there is much military activity and probably fearing attack from Nicaragua and Honduras troops are being sent toward the Pacific. You will again bring to the attention of President Chamorro the information contained in the telegram of November 4, 1919, from the Department of State.

[Paraphrase of a telegram from the Department of State to the American Legation at Managua, Nicaragua, dated Apr. 29, 1919.]

Reference is made to legation's telegram of April 23, 11 a. m.

You may indicate to President Chamorro the department's hopes that he will be guided in his actions by considerations of international comity. Department desires report on any new developments in the situation.

[Paraphrase of a telegram from the Department of State to the American Legation at Managua, Nicaragua dated May 3, 1919.]

Reference is made to department's telegram of April 29, 7 p. m., and legation's telegram of April 30, 4 p. m.

Watch closely the situation and keep department informed by cable of developments, as it does not wish to be criticized for failure to urge upon President Chamorro not only to remain strictly neutral, should there be any struggle between Tinoco and his opponents, but to carefully fulfill his duty by preventing expeditions being organized on the territory of Nicaragua.

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